CHRIST'S YOKE AN EASY YOKE;

And yet the

Gate to *Heaven* a *Strait Gate.*

In two excellent

SERMONS,

Well worthy the ſerious peruſal of the ſtricteſt Profeſſors.

By a Learned and Reverend Divine.

BIBL. CANT. ACAD.

HEB. 11. 4.

Who being dead, yet ſpeaketh.

LONDON:

Printed for *F. Smith*, at the Eliphant and Caſtle near the Royal Exchange in *Cornhil.* 1675.

Wee Speak not great things,
But Live them.
Variety in opinion & unity
In affection are not
Inconsistent

Printed for f. smith at ye Elephant & Castle in Cornhill.

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222:99

TO THE READER.

READER,

THese Sermons need no Epistle of Commendation before them; the Works of this Reverend Author (already extant praise him in the Gates: By means of a Person of Honour yet living, they are now come

into the Press for Publick use and benefit. For the subject matter of these excellent Sermons, it is of all other the most necessary, to make the Way of Christ pleasant to us, and to assure us of a blessed and glorious Reward at the end: Both which are handled by a Workman that needeth not to be ashamed. What can more endear a Christian to the obedience of Christ, than to find his very Yoke made easie, none of his Commands grievous, but his Ways, ways of pleasantness, and all his Paths peace; besides the great and everlasting Reward to all them that walk in them? And to quicken our diligence, that we be not slothful, but followers of them, who through faith and obedience inherit the promises, the Author hath added another serious and weighty Discourse, to shew us, That strait is the Gate, and narrow is the Way that leadeth unto life.

Though

To the Reader.

Though Christs Precepts are plain and easie to a sincere heart, that truly loves him; yet his Promises are not to be obtained but by a universal endeavour, in a uniform obedience to all his Commands.

In a word, Christs Yoke is easie; this should invite us to take his Yoke upon us: The Way is narrow that leadeth unto life, this should provoke us with care and circumspection to walk in it. The Reward is certain and infinite, this should encourage us, with greatest diligence, that we may at last obtain the Promise.

This we dout nobt was the design of the Author in preaching these Sermons; and we do assure thee no less in printing of them: Which that they may conduce to so happy and blessed

an

an end, is the hearty desire, and shall be the sincere prayer of thy

Friend,

to serve thee,

Christ's

CHRIST'S YOKE An Easie YOKE.

Matth. 11. 30.

For my Yoke is easie, and my Burden is light.

THE Holy JESUS came to break from off our necks two great Yokes: the one of *sin*, by which we were fettered and imprisoned in the condition of *Slaves* and miserable persons; the other of *Moses's Law*, by

which we are kept in pupillage and minority, and a ſtate of imperfection, and aſſerted unto us *the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God.* The firſt was a deſpotick Empire, the Government of a *Tyrant*; the ſecond was of a School-Maſter, ſevere, but it was in order to a further good, yet nothing pleaſant in the ſuffering and load. And now Chriſt having taken off theſe two, hath put on a third: he quits us of our *burden*, but not of our *duty*, and hath chang'd the former *Tyranny*, and the leſs perfect Diſcipline, into the ſweetneſs of paternal Regiment, and the excellency of ſuch an Inſtitution, *whoſe every Precept carries part of its reward in hand, and aſſurance of after Glories.*

Moſes Law was like ſharp and unpleaſant Phyſick, certainly painful, but uncertainly healthful. For it was not then communicated to them by Promiſe and univerſal Revelation, that

that the end of their Obedience ſhould be Life Eternal. But they ere full of hopes it might be ſo; as we are of health, when we have a learned and wiſe Phyſician: But as yet the reward was in a cloud, and the hopes in fetters and confinement.

But the Law of Chriſt is like Chriſt's healing of Diſeaſes, he does it *eaſily*, and he does it *infallibly*. The event is certainly conſequent, and the manner of cure is by a touch of his Hand, or a word of his Mouth, or an approximation to the hem of his Garment, without pains and vexatious Inſtruments. My meaning is, that Chriſtianity is by the aſſiſtance of Chriſt's Spirit which he promiſed us, and gave us in the Goſpel, made very eaſy to us: and yet a reward ſo great is promiſed, as were enough to make a lame Man to walk, and a broken Arm endure the burden: a

Reward great enough to make us willing to do *violence to all our Inclinations, Paſſions and Deſires.* A hundred weight to a Giant is a light burden, becauſe his ſtrength is diſproportionably great, and makes it as eaſie to him, as an ounce is to a Child. And yet if we had not the ſtrength of Giants, if the hundred weight were of Gold or Jewels, a weaker perſon would think it no trouble to bear that burden, if it were the reward of his portage, and the hire of his labours. The Spirit is given us to enable us, and Heaven is promiſed to encourage us; the firſt makes us *able*, and the ſecond makes us *willing*: and when we have power and affections we cannot complain of preſſure. And this is the meaning of our Bleſſed Saviour's invitation in my Text, *Mat.* 11. 30. Which St. *John* alſo obſerved, 1 John 5. 3, 4, 5. *For this is the love of God, that we keep his Commandments,*

mandments; and his Commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the World; and this is the Victory that overcometh, even our Faith; that is, our belief of God's Promises; the promise of the Spirit for present aid, and of Heaven for the future reward, is strength enough to overcome all the World.

But besides, that God hath made his Yoke easie by exterior supports more than ever was in any other Religion, *Christianity* is of it self, according to humane estimate, a Religion more easie, and desirable by our natural and reasonable appetites, than *Sin* in the midst of all its pleasures, and imaginary felicities. *Vertue* hath more pleasure in it than *Sin*, and hath all satisfaction to every desire of Man in order to humane and prudent ends, which I shall represent in the consideration of these particulars.

I.

To live according to the Laws of Jesus, is in some things most natural and proportionable to the desires and first intentions of nature.

II.

There is in it less trouble than in Sin.

III.

It conduces infinitely to the content of our lives, and natural and political satisfaction.

IV.

It is a means to preserve our temporal Lives long and healthy.

V.

It is most reasonable; and he only

ly is prudent that does so, and he a fool that does not; and all this, beside the consideration of a glorious and happy Eternity.

I.

Concerning the first I consider, that we do very ill, when instead of making our natural infirmity an instrument of humility, and of recourse to the Grace of God; we pretend the Sin of *Adam* to countenance our actual sins; natural infirmity to excuse our malice, either laying *Adam* in fault for deriving the disability upon us, or God for puting us into the necessity. But the evils that we feel in this, are from the rebellion of the inferior appetite against Reason, or against any Religion that puts restraint upon our first desires. And therefore in carnal and sensual instances, accidentally we find the more natural averseness, because God's

Laws have put our irrascible and concupiscible faculties in fetters and restraints: yet in matters of Duty, which are of immaterial and spiritual concernment, *all our natural reason is a perfect enemy and contradiction to, and a Law against Vice.* It is natural for us to love our Parents, and they that do not, are unnatural, they do violence to those dispositions which God gave us to the constitution of our Nature, and for the designs of Vertue; and all those tendernesses of affection, those bowels and relenting dispositions, which are the endearments of Parents and Children, are also the bands of Duty. Every degree of love makes Duty delectable, and therefore either by Nature we are inclined to hate our Parents (which is against all Reason and Experience) or else we are enclined to do them all that, which is the effect of love to such superiors, and prin-

ples

ciples of being and dependency; and every prevarication from the Rule, Effects and Expreſſes of Love, is a contradiction to Nature, and a mortification, to which we cannot be invited by any thing from within, but by ſomething from without, that's violent and preternatural. There are alſo many other Virtues even in the matter of ſenſual appetite, which none can loſe but by altering in ſome degree the natural diſpoſition; and I inſtance in the matter of carnality and uncleanneſs, to which poſſibly ſome natures may think themſelves apt and diſpos'd; but yet God hath put into our mouths a bridle to curb the licentiouſneſs of our ſpeedy appetite, putting into our very natures, a principle as ſtrong to reſtrain it, as there is in us a diſpoſition apt to invite us; and this is alſo in thoſe who are moſt apt to the Vice. Women and young Perſons, to whom

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whom God hath given a modeſty, and ſhame of nature, that the entertainment of Luſt may become contradictory to our retreating and backward modeſty, more than they are ſatisfactory to our too forward appetites.

It is as great a mortification and violence to Nature to bluſh, as to loſe a deſire; and we find it true, when perſons are invited to confeſs their ſins, or to ask forgiveneſs publickly; a ſecret ſmart is not ſo violent, as a publick ſhame. And therefore to do an action which brings ſhame all along, opens the ſanctuaries of Nature, and makes all her retirements publick, and diſmantles her incloſure, as Luſt does; and the ſhame of carnality hath in it more aſperity and abuſe to Nature, than the ſhort minutes of pleaſure, to which we are invited, can repay.

There are unnatural Luſts; Luſts, which

which are ſuch in their very condition and conſtitution, that a Man muſt turn a Woman, and a Woman become a Beaſt in acting them: and all Luſts that are not unnatural in their own complexion, are unnatural by a conſequent and accidental violence. And if Luſt hath in it diſſonancies to Nature, there are but few Apologies left to excuſe our Sins upon Natures ſtock; and all that ſyſtem of principles, and reaſonable inducements to Virtue, which we call the Law of Nature, is nothing elſe but that firm ligature and incorporation of Virtue to our natural principles and diſpoſitions, which whoſo prevaricates does more againſt Nature, than he that reſtrains his appetite. And beſides theſe particulars, there is not in our natural diſcourſes any inclination directly or by intention of it ſelf contrary to the love of God, becauſe by [God] we under-

understand that fountain of being, which is infinitely perfect in it self, and of great good to us, and whatsoever is so apprehended it is as natural for us to love, as to love any thing in the world; for we can love nothing but what we believe to be good in it self, or good to us. And beyond this there are in Nature many Principles and Reasons to make an aptness to acknowledge and confess God; and by the consent of Nations, which they also have learned from the Dictates of their Nature, all Men in some manner or other worship God.

And therefore when this our Nature is determined in its own indefinite principle to the manner of Worship, all acts against the Love, the Obedience, and Worship of God, are also against Nature, and offer it some rudeness and violence. And I shall observe this, and refer it to every Man's

Man's Reaſon and Experience, that the great difficulties commonly apprehended, commence not ſo much upon the ſtock of Nature as of Education, and evil habits. *Our Virtues are difficult, becauſe we at firſt get ill habits*; and theſe *habits* muſt be *unrooted*, before we do well, and that's our trouble. But if by the ſtrictneſs of Diſcipline, and wholſome Education, we begin at firſt in our Duty, and practice of vertuous Principles, we ſhall find Vertue made as natural to us, while it is cuſtomary and habitual, as we pretend infirmity to be, and propenſity to vitious practices. And this we are taught by that excellent *Hebrew*; who ſaid: *Wiſdom is eaſily ſeen of them that love her, and found of ſuch as ſeek her*: ſhe preventeth them that deſire her, in making her ſelf firſt known unto them. *Whoſo ſeeketh her early ſhall have no great travel, for he ſhall find her ſitting*

at his doors, Wisd. 6. 12, 13, 14.

II.

In the strict observance of the Law of Christianity there is less trouble, than in the habitual courses of Sin. For if we consider the general design of Christianity, it propounds to us in this world nothing that is of difficult purchase, nothing beyond what God allows us by the ordinary and common providence, such things which we are to receive without care and solicitous vexations; *So that the ends are nothing, and the way is easie*; and this walk'd over with much simplicity and sweetness, and those obtained without difficulty.

He that propounds to live low, pious, humble and retir'd, his main imployment is nothing but sitting quiet, and undisturb'd with variety of impertinent affairs. But he that loves the World

World & its acquisitions, entertains a thousand businesses, and every business hath a world of imployment, and every imployment is multiplied and made intricate by circumstances, and every circumstance is to be disputed, and he that disputes, ever hath two sides in enmity and opposition, and by this time there is a genealogie, a long descent and cognation of troubles, branch'd into so many particulars, that it is troublesome to understand them, and much more to run through them

The wayes of Virtue, are much upon the defensive, and the works one, uniform and little: they are like War within a strong Castle, if they stand upon their guard, they seldom need to strike a stroke. But Vice is like storming of a Fort, full of Noise, Trouble, Labour, Danger and Disease.

How easie a thing it is to restore the

the pledge! but if a Man means to defeat him that truſted him, what a world of Arts muſt he uſe to make pretences? to delay firſt, then to excuſe, then to object, then to intricate the buſineſs, next to quarrel, then to forſware it, and all the way to palliate his Crime, and repreſent himſelf honeſt. And if an oppreſſing and greedy perſon have a deſign to cozen a young Heir, or to get his neighbours Land, the cares of every day, and the interruptions of every nights ſleep are more, than the purchaſe is worth; ſince he might buy Virtue at half that watching, and the leſs painful care of a fewer number of dayes. A plain ſtory is ſooneſt told, and beſt confutes an intricate Lye. And when a Perſon is examined in Judgment, one falſe Anſwer asks more Wit for its ſupport and maintenance, than a Hiſtory of Truth. And ſuch perſons are put to

to so many shameful retreats, false colours, *fucus's*, and dawbings with untempered mortar to avoid contradiction or discovery, that the labour of a false story seems in the order of things to be design'd the beginning of its punishment. And if we consider how great a part of our Religion consists in Prayer, and how easie a thing God requires of us, when he commands us to pray for blessings, the duty of a Christian cannot seem very troublesome.

And indeed I can hardly instance in any Vice, but there is visibly more pain in the order of acting and observing it, than in the acquist or promotion of Vertue. I have seen drunken persons in their seas of *Drink* and *Talk*, dread every Cup as a blow, and have used devices and private arts to escape the punishment of a *full draught*; and the poor wretch being condemned by the laws of drink-

ing to his measure, was forced and haled to execution, and he suffered it, and thought himself engaged to that person, who with much kindness and importunity invited him to a Fever; but certainly there was more pain in it than in the strictness of holy and severe Temperance. And he that shall compare the troubles and dangers of an *Ambitious War* with the gentleness and easiness of Peace, will soon perceive that every Tyrant and usurping Prince, that snatches at his Neighbours Rights, hath two Armies, one of Men, the other of Cares. Peace sheds no Blood but that of the pruned Vine, and hath no business but modest and quiet entertainments of the time opportune for Piety, and circled with reward. But God often punishes Ambition and Pride with Lust, and he sent a Thorn in the flesh as a corrective to the Elevations of St. *Paul*, growing up

up from the multitude of his Revelations; and it is not likely the Punishment should have less trouble than the Crime, whose Pleasures and Obliquity this was design'd to punish. And indeed every Experience can verific, that an Adulterer hath in him the impatience of Desires, the burnings of Lust, the fear of Shame, the apprehensions of a jealous, abus'd and enraged Husband. He endures affronts, mistimings, tedious waitings, the dulness of delay, the regret of interruption, the confusion and amazements of discovery, the scorns of a reproached Vice, the debasings of contempt upon it; unless the Man grows impudent, and then he is more miserable upon another stock. But *David* was so put to it, to attempt, to obtain, to enjoy *Bathsheba*, and to prevent the shame of it, that the difficulty was greater than all his Wit and Power, and it drove him

into baſe and unworthy Arts, which diſcovered him the more, and multiplied his Crime: But while he enjoyed the innocent pleaſures of his lawful Bed, he had no more trouble in it, than there was in inclining his Head upon his Pillow. *Vertue* hath not half ſo much trouble in it, it ſleeps quietly without ſtartings and affrighting fancies, it looks cheerfully, ſmiles with much ſerenity; and though it laughs not often, yet it is ever delightful in the apprehenſions of ſome faculty. It fears no Man, nor nothing, nor is it diſcompoſed; and hath no concernments in the great alterations of the World, and entertains Death like a Friend, and reckons the iſſues of it as the greateſt of his hopes: But *Ambition* is full of diſtraction, it teems with ſtratagems as *Rebecca* with ſtruggling Twins, and is ſwell'd with expectation as a Tympany, and ſleeps ſometimes

times as the Wind in a Storm, ſtill and quiet for a minute, that it may burſt out in an impetuous blaſt, till the chordage of his Heart-ſtrings crack; Fears when none is nigh; prevents things, which never had intention, and falls under the inevitability of ſuch accidents, which either could not be foreſeen, or not prevented. The wayes of *Sin* are crooked, deſert, rocky and uneven; they are broad indeed, and there is variety of ruins, and allurements to entice Fools, and a large Theater to act the bloody Tragedy of Souls upon, but they are nothing ſmooth, or ſafe, or delicate. The wayes of *Vertue* are ſtrait, but not crooked; narrow, but not unpleaſant. There are two Vices for one Vertue, and therefore the way to Hell muſt needs be of greater extent, latitude and diſſemination. But becauſe *Vertue* is but one way, therefore it is eaſie, regu-

lar, and apt to walk in without errour or diversions.

Narrow is the Gate, and strait is the way: It is true, considering our evil customs and depraved Natures, by which we have made it so to us. But God hath made it more passable by his Grace and present Aids; and St. *John Baptist* receiving his commission to Preach Repentance, it was expressed in these words, *make plain the paths of the Lord.* Indeed Repentance is a rough and a sharp Vertue, and like a Mattock and Spade breaks away all the roughness of the passage, and hindrances of sin; but when we enter into the dispositions which Christ hath design'd to us, the way is more plain and easie than the wayes of Death and Hell. Labour it hath in it, just as all things that are excellent, but no confusions, no distractions of thoughts, no amazements, no labyrinths, and intri-

intricacy of counsels; But it is like the Labours of *Agriculture*, full of health and simplicity, plain and profitable, requiring diligence, but such, in which crafts and painful stratagems are useless, and impertinent. But *Vice* hath oftentimes so troublesome a retinue, and so many objections in the event of things, is so intangled in difficult and contradictory circumstances, hath in it parts so opposit to each other, and so inconsistent with the present condition of the Man, or some secret design of his, that those little pleasures, which are its *fucus* and pretence, are less perceiv'd and least enjoyed, while they begin in phantastick Semblances, and rise up in smoak, vain and hurtful, and end in dissatisfaction.

But it is considerable, that *God*, and the *Sinner*, and the *Devil*, all joyn in increasing the difficulty and trouble of Sin; upon contrary de-

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ſigns indeed, but all cooperate to the verification of this Diſcourſe. For *God* by his reſtraining Grace, the checks of a tender Conſcience, the bands of publick Honeſty, the ſenſe of Honour and Reputation, the cuſtoms of Nations, and the ſeverities of Laws, makes, that in moſt Men the choice of Vice is imperfect, dubious and troubleſome, the pleaſures abated, the apprehenſions various, and in differing degrees; and Men act their Crimes, while they are diſputing againſt them, and the Ballance is caſt by a few Grains; and ſcruples vex and diſquiet the poſſeſſion; and the difference is perceived to be ſo little, that inconſideration and inadvertency is the greateſt means to determine many Men to the entertainment of a Sin.

And this God does with a deſign to leſſen our choice, and diſabuſe our perſwaſions from Arguments and weak

weak pretences of Vice, and to invite us to the trials of Vertue, when we see its enemy giving us so ill conditions. And yet the sinner himself makes the business of Sin greater; for its Nature is so loathsome, its pleasure so little, and its promises so unperformed, that when it lies open and easie, and apt to be discern'd, there is no argument in it ready to invite us; and Men hate a Vice, which is every day offered and prostituted; and when they seek for pleasure, unless difficulty present it, as there is nothing in it really to perswade a choice, so there is nothing strong, or witty enough to abuse a Man. And to this purpose (among some others which are malicious and crafty) the Devil gives assistance, knowing that Men despise what is cheap and common, and suspect a latent excellency to be in difficult and forbidden objects; and there-

therefore the Devil ſometimes croſſes an opportunity of Sin, knowing that the deſire is the iniquity, and does his work ſufficiently; and yet the croſſing the deſire by impeding the act heightens the appetite, and makes it more violent and impatient. But by all theſe means Sin is made more troubleſome, than the pleaſures of the Temptation can account for: and it will be a ſtrange imprudence to leave Vertue upon pretence of its difficulty, when for that very reaſon, we the rather entertain the inſtances of Sin, deſpiſing a cheap Sin, and a coſtly Vertue; chooſing to walk through the Brambles of a deſert, rather than to climb the Fruit-Trees of Paradiſe.

III.

Vertue conduces infinitly to the content of our lives, to Secular felicities

licities, and Political ſatisfactions; and *Vice* doth the quite contrary. For the bleſſings of this Life are theſe, that make it happy, Peace and Quietneſs, Content and Satisfaction of deſires, Riches, love of Friends and Neighbours; Honour and Reputation abroad; a healthful Body and a long Life. This laſt is a diſtinct Conſideration, but the other are proper to this Title.

For the firſt it is certain. *Peace* was ſo deſign'd by the Holy *Jeſus*, that he fram'd all his Laws in complyance with that deſign. He, that returns good for evil, a ſoft anſwer to the aſperity of his Enemy, kindneſs to injuries, leſſens the contention alwayes, and ſometimes gets a Friend, and when he does not, he ſhames his Enemy. Every little accident in a family, to peeviſh and angry perſons, is the matter of a quarrel, diſcompoſes the Peace of the Houſe,

Houſe, and ſets it on Fire, and no Man can tell how far that may burn; it may be, to a diſſolution of the whole Fabrick. But whoſoever obeys the Laws of *Jeſus*, bears with the infirmities of his Relatives and Society, ſeeks with ſweetneſs to remedy what is ill, and to prevent what it may produce, and throws water upon a ſpark; and lives ſweetly with his Wife, affectionately with his Children, providently and diſcreetly with his Servants, and they all love the *Major domo*, and look upon him as their Parent, their Guardian, their Friend, their Patron, their Proveditor. But look upon a perſon angry, peaceleſs and diſturbed, when he enters upon his threſhold, it gives an alarm to his houſe, and puts them to flight, or upon their defence; and the Wife reckons the joy of her day is done when he returns; and the Children enquire into their Father's

Age,

Age, and think his Life tedious; and the Servants curſe privately, and do their ſervice as Slaves do, only when they dare not do otherwiſe; and they ſerve him, as they ſerve a Lyon, they obey his Strength, and fear his Cruelty, and deſpiſe his Manners, and hate his Perſon. No Man injoyes content in his Family but he that is peaceful and charitable, juſt and loving, forbearing and forgiving, careful and provident. He that is not ſo, his Houſe may be his Caſtle, but it is mann'd by his Enemies; his Houſe is built not upon the Sand, but upon the Waves, and upon a Tempeſt, the Foundation is uncertain, but his Ruine is not ſo.

And if we extend the relations of the Man beyond his own Walls, he that does his duty to his Neighbour, that is, all offices of kindneſs, gentleneſs and humanity, nothing of injury and affront, is certain never to meet

meet with a wrong so great, as is the inconvenience of a Law-Suit, or the contention of Neighbours and all the consequent dangers and troubles.

Kindness will create and invite kindness; an injury provokes an injury. And since the love of Neighbours is one of those beauties, which *Solomon* did admire, and that this beauty is within the combination of precious things, which adorn and reward a peaceable charitable disposition, he that is in love with Spiritual excellencies, with intellectual rectitudes, with Peace and with blessings of Society, knows they grow among the Rose-bushes of Vertues, and holy Obedience to the Laws of JESUS. And for a good Man some will even dare to dye, and a sweet and charitable disposition is received with fondness, and all the endearments of the Neighbourhood. He that observes how many Families

are

are ruin'd by contention, and how many Spirits are broken by Care, and Contumely, Fear and Spight, which are entertain'd as Advocates to promote a Suit of Law, will soon confess, that a great loss and peaceable quitting of a considerable Interest is a purchase and a gain, in respect of a long Suit, and a vexatious Quarrel.

And still if the Proportion rises higher, the Reason swels and grows more necessary and determinate. For if we would live according to the Discipline of Christian Religion, one of the great Plagues, which vex the World, would be no more.

That there should be no Wars, was one of the designs of Christianity, and the living according to that Institution, which is able to prevent all *Wars*, and to establish an universal and eternal *Peace*, when it is obeyed, is the using an infallible instrument toward

toward that part of our political happineſs, which conſiſts in Peace. This World would be an image of Heaven, if all Men were Charitable, Peaceable, Juſt and Loving. To this excellency all thoſe Precepts of Chriſt, which conſiſt in Forbearance and Forgiveneſs, do cooperate.

But the next inſtance of the reward of *Holy Obedience* and *conformity to Chriſt's Laws* is it ſelf a duty, and needs no more but a meer repetition of it. We muſt be content in every State; and becauſe Chriſtianity teaches us this leſſon, it teaches us to be Happy: for nothing from without can make us miſerable, unleſs we joyn our own conſents to it, and apprehend it ſuch, and entertain it in our ſad and melancholy retirements. A Priſon is but a retirement and opportunity of ſerious thoughts to a perſon whoſe Spirit is confin'd, and apt to ſit ſtill, and deſires

ſires no enlargement beyond the cancels of the Body, till the ſtate of ſeparation calls it forth into a fair liberty. But every Retirement is a Priſon to a looſe and wandring fancy, for whoſe wildneſs no precepts are reſtraint, no band of duty is confinement, who, when he hath broken the hedge of duty, can never after endure any encloſure ſo much as in Symbol. But this Precept is ſo neceſſary, that it is no more a Duty than a rule of Prudence, and in many accidents of our Lives it is the only cure of ſadneſs: for 'tis certain, that no Providence leſs than Divine can prevent evil and croſs accidents; but that is an excellent Remedy to the evils, that receives the accident within its power, and takes out the ſting, paring the Nails, and drawing the Teeth of the Wild-beaſt, that it may be tame or harmleſs, and Medicinal. For all content conſiſts in the

in the proportion of the Object to the appetite. And becauſe external accidents are not in our power, and it were nothing excellent that things happened to us according to our firſt deſires, God hath by his Grace put it into our own power to make the happineſs, by making our deſires deſcend to the event, and comply with the chance, and combine with all the iſſues of Divine Providence. And then we are noble perſons, when we borrow not our content from things below us, but make our ſatisfactions from within. And it may be conſidered, that every little Care may diſquiet us, and may encreaſe it ſelf by reflexion upon its own Acts; and every diſcontent may diſcompoſe our Spirits, and put an edge, and make afflictions poynant, but cannot take off one from us, but makes every one to be two. But content removes not the accident, but complyes with

it; it takes away the ſharpneſs and diſpleaſure of it, and by ſtooping down makes the heights equal, proportionate and commenſurate. Impatience makes an Ague to be a Fever, and every Fever to be a Calenture, and that Calenture may expire in madneſs: But a quiet Spirit is a great diſpoſition to Health, and for the preſent does alleviate the Sickneſs. And this alſo is notorious in the inſtance of Covetouſneſs. The love of money is the root of all evil, which while ſome have coveted after, they have pierced themſelves with many Sorrows. *Vice* makes poor, and does ill endure it.

For he, that in the ſchool of Chriſt hath learnt to determine his deſires when his needs are ſerved, and to judg of his needs by the proportions of Nature, hath nothing wanting towards Riches. *Vertue* makes Poverty to become rich, and no riches can

ſatisfie a covetous mind, or reſcue him from the affliction of the worſt kind of Poverty. He only wants, that is not ſatisfied. And there is great infelicity in a Family, where Poverty dwells with diſcontent; there the Husband and Wife quarrel for want of a full Table, and a rich Wardrobe; and their Love, that was built upon falſe Riches, ſinks, when ſuch temporary ſupporters are removed. They are like two Milſtones, which ſet the Mill on fire when they want Corn. And then their combinations and ſociety were unions of Luſt, when not ſupported with Sacramental and Religious Love.

But we may eaſily ſuppoſe St. *Joſeph*, and the Holy Virgin Mother in *Egypt* poor as hunger, forſaken as baniſhment, diſconſolate as ſtrangers; and yet their preſent lot gave them no affliction, becauſe the Angel fed them with a neceſſary Hoſpitality

pitality, and their desires were no larger than their Tables, their Eyes look'd only upwards, and they were carless of the future, and careful of their duty, and so made their life pleasant by the measures and discourses of Divine Philosophy. When *Elisha* stretch'd himself upon the body of the Child, and laid hands to hands, and applied mouth to mouth, and so shrunk himself into the posture of commensuration with the Child, he brought life into the dead Trunk: and so may we by applying our Spirits to the proportion of a narrow fortune, bring life and vivacity into our dead and lost condition, and make it live till it grows bigger, or else returns to health and salutary uses.

And besides this Philosophical extraction of Gold from Stones, and Riches from the dungeon of Poverty, a holy life does most probably procure such a proportion of Riches

which can be useful to us, or consistent with our felicity. For (besides that the Holy Jesus hath promised all things, which our Heavenly Father knows we need (provided we do our duty) and that we find great securities and rest from care, when we have once cast our cares upon our God, and plac'd our hopes in his bosome: besides all this) the Temperance, Sobriety and Prudence of a Christian is a great income, and by not despising it a small revenue combines its parts, till it grows to a heap big enough for the emissions of Charity, and all the offices of Justice, and the supplies of all necessities. Whilest Vice is unwary, prodigal, indiscreet, throwing away great revenues, as tributes to intemperance and vanity, and suffering dissolution and forfeiture of estates, as a punishment and curse. Some Sins are direct improvidence and

and ill-husbandry. I reckon in this number Intemperance, Luſt, Litigiouſneſs,, Ambition, Bribery, Prodigality, Gaming, Pride, Sacriledge, which is the greateſt ſpender of them all, and makes a fair eſtate evaporate, like Camphire, turning it into nothing, no Man knows which way. But what a *Roman* gave as an eſtimate of a Rich Man, ſaying, *He that can maintain an Army is Rich*, was but a ſhort account: for he that can maintain an Army, may be begger'd by one Vice; and it is a vaſt revenue that will pay the Debt-Books of Intemperance or Luſt.

To theſe if we add, that Vertue is honourable, and a great advantage to a fair reputation; that it is praiſed by them that love it not; that it is honour'd by the followers and Family of Vice; that it forces Glory out of ſhame, Honour from contempt; that it reconciles Men to the foun-

tain of Honour, the Almighty God, who will honour them that honour him. There are but a few more Excellencies in the World to make up the Rosary of temporal felicity. And it is so certain, that Religion serves even our temporal ends, that no great end of State can well be served without it; not ambition, not desires of wealth, not any great designs; but Religion must be made its usher or support. If a new Opinion be commenc'd, and the Author would make a Sect, and draw Disciples after him, at least he must be thought to be Religious, which is a demonstration how great an instrument of Reputation Piety and Religion is; and if the pretence will do us good offices among Men, the reality will do the same, besides the advantages which we shall receive from the Divine benediction. The Power of Godliness will certainly do more than the form alone

alone. And it is most notorious in the affairs of the Clergy, whose lot it hath been to fall from great riches to poverty, when their wealth made them less curious of their Duty; but when Humility and Chastity, and exemplary Sanctity have been the enamel of their holy Order, the people, like the *Galathians*, would pull out their own eyes to do them benefit. And indeed, God hath singularly blessed such instruments, to the being the only remedies to repair the breaches made by Sacriledge and Irreligion.

But certain it is, no Man was ever honoured for that which they esteemed vitious. *Vice* hath got money and a curse many times, and Vice hath adhered to the instruments and purchases of honour. But among all Nations, whatsoever they call'd Honourable, put on the face and pretence of Vertue. But I chuse to instance

ſtance in the proper cogniſance of a Chriſtian [*Humility*] which ſeems contradictory to the purpoſes and reception of Honour, and yet in the world nothing is a more certain means to purchaſe it. Do not all the World hate a proud Man? And therefore what is contrary to Humility is alſo contradictory to Honour and Reputation. And when the Apoſtles had given command, that in giving Honour we ſhould one go before another, he laid the foundation of Praiſes, Panegyricks, and Triumphs. And as Humility is ſecure againſt affronts, and tempeſts of deſpite, becauſe it is below them: So when by employment, or any other iſſue of Divine Providence, it's drawn from its ſheath and ſecreſie, it ſhines clear and bright as the pureſt and moſt poliſh'd Metals. Humility is like a Tree, whoſe roots, when it ſets deepeſt in the Earth, riſes higher, and

ſpreads

ſpreads fairer, and ſtands ſurer, and laſts longer; every ſtep of its deſcent is like a rib of Iron, combining its parts in unions indiſſoluble, and placing it in the Chambers of ſecurity.

No wiſe Man ever loſt any thing by ceſſion; but he receives the Hoſtility of violent perſons into his imbraces, like a ſtone into a lap of Wooll, it reſts and ſets down ſoft and innocently: but a ſtone falling upon a ſtone makes a colliſion, and extracts Fire, and finds no reſt: And juſt ſo are two proud perſons, deſpis'd by each other, contemn'd by all, living in perpetual diſſonances, alwayes fighting againſt affronts, jealous of every perſon, diſturb'd by every accident, a perpetual ſtorm within, and daily hiſſings from without.

The

The Gate to Heaven a Strait Gate.

Luke 13. 23,24.

Then ſaid one unto him, Lord, are there few that ſhall be ſaved? And he ſaid unto them;

Strive to enter in at the Strait Gate, for many, I ſay unto you will ſeek to enter in, but ſhall not be able.

THE life of a Chriſtian is a perpetual contention for maſtery, a continual ſtrife: Indeed we uſually ſtrive too much, and that for trifles and rewards inconſiderable; Nay,

Nay, we ſtrive for things that ruine us; whereas if we would ſtrive lawfully, that is, for that Crown that is laid up for us, & run that race which is ſet before us, our ſtrivings would be as good as peace and reſt; for they would bring us peace at the laſt; Victory and Peace, Security and Eternity, Joy and infinite Satisfactions, and theſe are things worth ſtriving for.

But here plainly is our Duty.

I.

We muſt ſtrive to enter. And this Duty enforc'd by a double Argument.

1. From the order of the end, and nature of the thing: *the Gate is ſtrait*, and therefore we muſt ſtrive.

2. From

2. From the caution and example of them, that have fallen ſhort for want of due ſtriving. Many ſought, and fain would have entred, but for want of ſtriving they were not able.

1. And firſt of the duty it ſelf, *Contendite intrare*: *ſtrive to enter in at the ſtrait Gate.*

And here I conſider, That beſides the extenſion of our Duty, there being more Duties required of us than of any ſort of men before the preaching of the Goſpel (the Jews themſelves, who reckon that *Moſes* gave to them ſix hundred and thirteen Precepts, having received no precept at all concerning Prayer, Faith, or Repentance) beſides this I ſay, I conſider, that not only in reſpect of the extenſion, but by reaſon of the intenſion of our Duty, and the degrees of Holineſs that the holy Laws of Chriſtia-

Chriſtianity require of us, it is neceſſary that we ſtrive with great earneſtneſs. *Qui enim Sanctitatem Sanctè cuſtodiunt, judicabuntur Sancti*, ſaith the Wiſdom of *Solomon.* cap. 6. v. 10. *A Man may do holy things unholily.* There are ſome that preach Chriſt out of envy, there are many that get Proſelytes for gain; there are ſome that are zealous to get Diſciples, that they may glory in their Fleſh, as ſome faſe Apoſtles did to the *Galatians*; there is ſome zeal in an evil matter; and many times, when a Man hath done good actions, he is the further off from the Gates of Heaven, not becauſe he did the good actions, but becauſe he wanted thoſe formalities & circumſtances, thoſe manners and degrees, thoſe principles and ends, which make *good actions* in themſelves be good in us, which crown the *actions* and make us to be accepted.

It was well done in the Phariſees to

to Pray often, and to Faſt twice in the week, and to give Alms; and yet theſe very good actions were ſo far from being commended, that they became the object of his anger, and the matter of reproof, and it was becauſe they did it with a deſign to be accounted holy. Indeed they blew a Trumpet, but that was to call the poor together, that was the external end. But there was a little Ivy crept up on this goodly Oak, till it ſuckt its heart out; they themſelves would be taken notice of, and that ſpoil'd all; their actions went no further than the end which they propounded to themſelves. For that which Men make their principal end, that God will ſuffer ſhall be their end. If they ſeek the praiſe of Men, that being their purpoſe, that ſhall be their reward; but if they aim at the pleaſure of God, and the rewards of Heaven, thither will God's Mercy and their

own good deeds bear them.

A little leaven it is that sowrs the whole lump. Who would have thought, that our Blessed Saviour should have found fault with the Pharisees for giving God thanks for his Graces, or not have been satisfied with the exactness of their Justice and Religion, that they would give Tith, even of Mint and Anise and Cumminseeds; or have reprov'd *Judas* for having care of the poor, or discountenanc'd the Jews for accusing the Woman taken in *Adltery*; or have been discontented at the *Doctors* of the Law for being strict and severe exactors of the Law of *God* at the people's hands, or check'd them for observing the innocent customs of their Nation, and Tradition of their fore-Fathers? Since all these acts were Pious, or Just, or Charitable, or Religious, or Prosecutions of some part or other of their Duty. The several reasons

of

of these reprehensions our Blessed Saviour subjoyns at the end of every of them respectively. They wanted a circumstance, or a good manner; their actions were better than their intentions, and sometimes their malice was greatest in their very acts of Charity. And when they gave God thanks, they did despite to their Brother; something or other did envenom the face of these acts of Piety; Their heart was not upright, or their Religion was imperfect; their Piety wanted some integral part, or had an evil Eye. A word, a thought, a secret purpose, a less holy intention, any indirect circumstance, or obliquity in an accident makes our Piety become impious, and deprives us of our reward. Here therefore we had need to Watch, to Strive, to Pray, to Contend, and to do all diligence that can be expres'd by all the *Synonyma's* of care and industry.

2. We had need to Strive, becauſe though Vertues be nice and curious, yet *vitia ſunt in facili et propinquo*, Sin lies at the door, and is thruſt upon us by the violence of Adverſaries, or by the ſubtilty and inſinuation of its own nature, which we are to underſtand to the following ſence. For when we are born of Chriſtian Parents, we are born in *puris naturalibus*, we have at firſt no more promptneſs to commit ſome ſort of Sins, than to commit ſome good acts. We are as apt to learn to love God, as to love our Parents, if we be taught it. For though Original Sin hath loſt to us all thoſe ſupernaural aſſiſtances, which were at firſt put into our Nature *per modum gratiæ*; yet it is but by accident that we are more prone to Sin, than we are to Virtue. For after this it happened that God giving us Laws, made his reſtraints and prohibitions in *materia voluptatis ſenſualis*,

he

he by his Laws hath enjoyn'd us to deny our natural Appetites in many things. Now this being become the matter of *Divine Laws*, that we ſhould in many parts and degrees abſtain from what pleaſes our ſenſe, by this ſupervening accident it happens that we are very hardly wean'd from Sin, but moſt eaſily tempted to a Vice; our Nature is not contrary to Virtue, but the inſtances of ſome Vertues are made to come croſs our Nature.

But in things intellectual and immaterial, we are indeed indifferent to Virtue and Vice; I ſay, where neither one, nor the other ſatisfies the ſenſual part.

In the Old Law, when it was a duty to Swear by the *God of Iſrael* in common Cauſes, Men were indifferent to that, and to ſwear by the *Queen of Heaven*; they had no more natural inclination to the one,

than to the other, except where ſomething ſenſual became the argument to determine them. And in ſenſual things, if God had commanded *Polygamy* or promiſcuous concubinate, and indifferent unlimited Luſt, Men had been more apt to obey that Commandment, than to diſobey it. But then the reſtraint lying upon our natural appetites, and we being by ill Education determin'd upon, and almoſt engag'd to Vitious Actions, we ſuffer under the inconveniences of idle Education, and in the mean time rail upon *Adam* and *Original Sin*. It is indifferent to us to love our Fathers, and to love ſtrangers. And if from our Infancy we be told concerning a ſtranger that he is our Father; we frame our affections to Nature, and our Nature to Cuſtom and Education, and are as apt to love him, who is not, and yet is ſaid to be, as him who is ſaid not to be, and yet indeed is our natural Father. The

The purpoſe of this Diſcourſe is this, that we may conſider how Sin creeps upon us in our Education ſo tacitely and undiſcernably, that we miſtake the cauſe of it; and yet ſo effectually and prevalently, that we gueſs it to be our very Nature, and charge it upon *Adam*, when every one of us is the *Adam*, the Man of Sin, and the Parent of our own Iniquities. We are taught to be revengeful even in our Cradles, and taught to ſtrike our neighbours as a means to ſtill our frowardneſs, and ſatisfie our wranglings. Our Nurſes teach us to know the greatneſs of our birth, or the riches of our inheritance, or they learn us to be proud, or to be impatient, before we learn to know God, or to ſay our Prayers.

After we are grown up to more years, we have Tutors of impiety, that are ſtronger to perſwade, and more diligent to inſinuate, and we

are more receptive of every vicious impreſſion. And not to reckon all the inconveniencies of evil company, indulgence of Parents, publick and authoriz'd cuſtoms of Sin, and all the miſchiefs and dangers of publick Society, and private retirements, when we have learn'd to diſcern good from evil, and when we are prompted to do a good, or engaged to it by ſome happy circumſtance or occaſion, our good is ſo ſeldom, and ſo little, and there are ſo many ways of ſpoyling it, that there are not more ways to make an Army miſcarry in a Battle, than there are to make us periſh even in our good actions.

Every Enemy that is without, every weakneſs and imperfection we have within; every temptation, every vitious circumſtance, every action of our life mingled with intereſt and deſign, is as a particular argument to engage our earneſtneſs and zeal in this

this Duty *ut contendamus acriter*, that we ſtrive and make it our buſineſs, to enter into the Strait Gate. For ſince the Writers of Moral Inſtitutions and Caſes of Conſcience have made no ſuch abbreviatures of the Duty. of a Chriſtian, but that I think there are amongſt them all without *hyperbole* five thouſand Caſes of Conſcience, beſides the ordinary plain Duty of a Chriſtian, and there may be five thouſand times five thouſand, and the wit of Man can no more comprize all Caſes, which are or may be within their Books, than they can at once deſcribe an infinity, or ſet down the biggeſt number that can be; it will follow that it is a nice thing to be a Chriſtian, and all the ſtriving we can uſe, will be little enough towards the doing of our *duty*.

And now if you enquire, what is meant by ſtriving in this place? and what is the full intention of this Precept?

I Anſwer; it is an infinite or indefinite term, and ſignifies no determinate degree of labour and endeavour, but even as much as we can, ſuppoſing our weakneſſes, our hindrances and avocations; that is, to make it the buſineſs of our Lives, the care of our Thoughts, our ſtudy and the greateſt imployment of the whole Man to ſerve God. Holy Scripture gives us general notions and comprehenſions of the whole Duty of Man, that may be excellent guides to us in this particular, Heb. 12. 1. *Let us lay aſide every weight, and the Sin that doth ſo eaſily beſet us. For he that contendeth for Maſtery is temperate in all things,* ſaith *St. Paul.* There is firſt an obligation of all Sin whatſoever, every weight, every Sin, every hindrance; abſtaining from all things whatſoever that are impediments. And we do not ſtrive to do this, unleſs we uſe all the means we can to learn

learn what is our Duty, and what infinite variety of Sins there are that ſo eaſily beſet us. And let me deſire you to obſerve one thing; make a tryal in any one Sin that is or hath been moſt pleaſing to any of you, and according to your Duty ſet upon its mortification heartily and throughly, and try whether it will not be a hard ſtrife with fleſh and blood, and a great contention to kill that one crime; I mean in the midſt of your temptations to it, and opportunities of acting it; and by this you may make a ſhort conjecture, at the greatneſs of this Duty. And this is but the one half; For the extirpation of *Vices* is not always the introduction of *Virtues*. For there are ſome Men that have ceaſed from an act of Sin, that ſtill retain the affection, and there are others who have quitted their affection to Sin, who yet are not reconciled to the difficulty and pains of

of acquiring Vertues. *I thank God I am no Extortioner, no Adulterer, not as this Publican*, ſaith the Phariſee: So far many go, and then they think themſelves fairly aſſoiled, who are only like miſguided Travellers, that upon diſcovery of their error ceaſe to wander further, but are not yet returned, nor have made any progreſs in the true way. Some Men ceaſe to oppreſs their Neighbours, and will do ſo no more; but they think not of making reſtitution of what wrongs have been done by them long ſince. Some Men will leave off from Drunkenneſs; but they think not of faſting, and enduring Hunger and Thirſt and Pains to puniſh their paſt Intemperance. There is a further ſtriving, or we ſhall not enter into the narrow Gate. St. *Peter* gives an excellent account of it; 2 Pet. 1. 4. *Having eſcaped the corruption that is in the World through Luſt*; that's one half:

half: but he adds, *And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your Faith, Vertue, and to Vertue Knowledge, to Knowledg Temperance, to Temperance Patience, to Patience Godliness, to Godliness Brotherly kindness, to Brotherly kindness Charity: these things must be in you and abound*, saith St. *Peter*; and therefore, as himself prefaces, you had need give all diligence, and strive earnestly to all these purposes.

In the mean time I pray remember, that this is not to strive, when we only do perform those Offices of Religion, which Custom or the Laws of a Church enjoyn us to: nor this when our Religion is cheap and easy, when we use arts to satisfie our Conscience, and heap up Teachers of our own to that purpose, that by a stratagem they and we may bend the Duty to our Conscience, not measure our *Conscience* by our *Duty*; when we call

ſecurity a juſt peace, want of underſtanding a ſufficient warrant for quietneſs, the not-committing of deformed and ſcandalous Sins a pious Life; this is far from ſtriving, here is no ſtriving in this, but how to cozen and abuſe our ſelves. If the affairs of the World (I do not ſay) take up not only moſt of our time, but moſt of our affections; if the returns of Sin be frequent, and of Religion be ſeldom and unpleaſant; If any Vice hath got poſſeſſion of us, or that we have not got poſſeſſion of all thoſe Virtues we have uſe of, we have not ſtriven Lawfully. Shall I tell you, how St. *Paul* did ſtrive? that thence we a ſo may have a fair patern and preſident to imitate, 2 *Cor.* 6. you have his courſe of Life largely deſcribed: *Giving no offence in any thing, but approving our ſelves in much Patience, in Afflictions, in Labours, in Watchings, in faſtings, by Pureneſs, by Knowledge, by*

by Long-ſuffering, by kindneſs, by the Holy Ghoſt, by Love unfeigned, by the Word of Truth, by the Power of God, by the Armour of Righteouſneſs, and by an evenneſs of Temper in the midſt of an uneven, unquiet and contradictory condition: this was his courſe of Life, thus did he labour *Mortifying* his *Soul*, heightening his Devotion, bringing his Body under, and advancing the intereſts of the Goſpel, leſt by any means he had run, or ſhould run in vain.

I ſpeak not theſe things to diſcourage you, but to provoke you to good Works and a Holy Life. For if you ask, who does all this, or indeed who is able?

I anſwer; it is no good argument of an affection to God, when we make ſuch ſcrupulous queſtions concerning his Injunctions. He that loves God, does all this; Love is the fulfilling of the Commandments: *Love hopeth all things, endureth all things,* thinketh

thinketh nothing impoſſible; attempteth thoſe things as moſt eaſie, which to natural Reaſon ſeem impoſſible.

For conſider, that as without God's Grace we can do nothing; ſo by his Grace ſtrengthening us we can do any thing. Faith works Miracles, and Charity does more. *Through Chriſt that ſtrengthens me I can do all things*, ſaith St. *Paul*, and *Chriſt's Grace is ſufficient for me*, ſufficient to all God's purpoſes, and to all mine. For it is not commanded to us to remove Mountains from their places, which we never plac'd there; but to remove our Sins which we our ſelves have made. We are not commanded to do things, which are not in our Power; but ſuch things which God enables us to, and to which we diſable our ſelves by cowardice, & intimidating our own Spirits, by deſpairing of God's Grace, by refuſing to labour,

by

by deferring our endeavours till the weight of our ſin grows great, and our ſtrength grows leſs; till our iniquities are many, and our days are few; and then indeed we have ſome reaſon to ſay, we cannot ſtrive in ſuch meaſure, as the greatneſs o theſe Duties does require. f

And yet remember 'tis but ſtriving, that is, doing the utmoſt of our endeavour; the beſt Man in the World can do no more than uſe all his endeavour, and he that is weakeſt can do ſo much, that is, he can do his endeavour. And although a Boy cannot ſtrike ſo great a ſtroke as a ſtrong Man, yet he can put forth all his ſtrength; and the juſt and merciful Lawgiver never requires more of us than all we have upon the ſtock of Nature, and all he hath given us in the Banks of Grace. So that the Duty we are here engaged upon, is but an earneſt endeavour to

do our beſt, and all we can; and every Man can do that: But becauſe they will not, becauſe Men have habitual averſations from the practices of a holy life, becauſe to do actions of ſevere Religion and ſtrict Piety is troubleſom to their affections, becauſe contrariant to their wills, therefore it is they call it hard and impoſſible; whereas it is not the impoſſibility of the thing, but their own diſaffections, that have heightned the difficulty to a ſeeming impoſſibility.

And thus I have done with the firſt Part of the Text, the Duty it ſelf, with its manner of performance: We muſt ſtrive to enter into the narrow Gate of Life, and Bliſful Immortality.

II.

II.

And that leads to the ſecond Part, or the firſt Argument to engage our endeavours and earneſt ſtrivings; becauſe the paſſage is hard and difficult, and not to be acquir d by men that love their eaſe; but by thoſe that with Chriſtian fortitude encounter all difficulties and oppoſitions. *Porta eſt anguſta*, the Gate is narrow; therefore ſtrive.

And 1. I conſider that *Virtues* and *Vices* many of them are ſo very like, that it is very often extreamly difficult to diſtinguiſh them exactly, and purſue the Virtue curiouſly. *Virtue* lies between two *Vices*, not as a mediocrity, but as a thing aſſaulted by two enemies; for one Vertue two Vices, and each of the extreams hath ſomething of the Virtue in it. A *Prodigal* hath the open-handedneſs of a liberal perſon; and a covetous per-

ſon is as wary, as he that ſpends nothing in vain, and both theſe would think themſelves uncivilly dealt withal, if the freeneſs of the one, or the reſtraint of the other ſhould be called vicious. And there are ſome Precepts, which ſome will think they have Reaſon to ſay they have ſtrictly obſerved, when they have been moſt notorious Prevaricators of it: For may not a vain-glorious perſon, that gives Alms out of the promptneſs of his Spirit, think he hath done his Alms well, although he hath done them publickly; it being a Divine Precept, *That our Light ſo ſhine before Men, that other Men ſeeing our good Works, might glorifie our heavenly Father.* And if this be a Precept, poſſibly alſo ſome who tranſgreſs this Precept, may think themſelves ſafe on the ſurer ſide of Humility. And truly that we may ſee how dangerous our condition is,

and

and yet how ſafe our imaginations are, I think no Man will doubt, but all God's Commandments have been broken, and this of *Luceat lux veſtra,* (Let your Light ſhine) amongſt the reſt; and yet I never read or heard any man, in the greateſt and largeſt of his Confeſſions ever acknowledge that Crime, that he had not done his good deeds publickly. But between the Duty of publication of good Deeds, and the Duty of Humility, the way is ſo narrow, that it is hard to hit it right; and when, and how, and in what manner, and in what circumſtances to do either, is the work of great underſtanding and much obſervation.

I conſider yet further; many times a *Virtue* and a *Vice* differ but in one degree: For there is a Rule of Juſtice to which if any Man adds but one degree of ſeverity more, it degenerates into cruelty; and a little

more than mercy is remiſneſs ; and want of Diſcipline introduces licentiouſneſs , and becomes unmerciful as to the publick, and unjuſt as to the particular. Now this Conſideration is heightned, if we obſerve that Vertue and Vice conſiſt not in *indiviſibili*, but there is a latitude for either, which is not to be judg'd of by any certain Rules drawn from the nature of the thing, but to be eſtimated in proportion to the perſons , and other accidental circumſtances.

Vertue and *Vice* dwell too near together , unleſs they were better friends. All the Learning of the *Sanhedrim* could not diſtinguiſh between the Humiliation of *Ahab* and *Manaſſes*, nor between the Zeal of *Jehu* and *Joſiah*, nor between *Joſhuah*'s and *David*'s numbring the people; and yet *Ahab* was but an imperfect penitent; *Jehu* was a furious

Zea-

Zealot, and *David* sinned grievously; whereas *Manasses* was truly contrite; and *Josiah* was a zealous Reformer, and *Joshuah* in the same action was a wise and provident Captain. *Abraham* was called the friend of God for offering *Isaac* at God's command. Now God commanded men to perform their Vows, and yet *Jepthah* for offering up his Daughter, hath left to Posterity the reputation of a temerarious and inconsiderate person. There is a right hand and a left in the paths of our life, and if we decline to either we are undone. And therefore pious and holy persons are called upright men, and the Precept in Scripture is frequently ingeminated, to walk in all God's Commandments with *an upright heart*. For on the right hand of Man is ruine, and on the left is destruction; and in all the infinite variety of sins, there is no other variety of

conditions, but either to periſh, or to be undone.

For every one *Vice* kills the Soul, but every Vertue does not make alive. Adultery condemns a Man to the loweſt miſery, but Chaſtity alone does not keep our Souls from death: Becauſe we are forbidden to commit any ſin. Every crime lies under a prohibition, and the ſame Laws of God command us to purſue all Vertues, and enjoyn the integrity of a holy life. Now as he that commits one ſin, or entertains a ſingle Vice, breaks the Commandment, which enjoyns him to forſake all ſin; ſo he obſerves not the Precept of God concerning Vertues, that does not acquire and entertain all, univerſally all. A Man is ſpotted although he have but one ſtain; but he is not clean, unleſs he be all clean. A Cup is broken, if only the top be broken, but is not entire

tire unleſs every part of it be inviolate. One Diſeaſe can make a whole man ſick, but the taking away one Diſeaſe will not make all men well; and there are a hundred wayes to wander in, but one only way to Life and Immortality. So that I ſhall not need to urge the variety of Temptations, the ſubtilty of Sin, the watchfulneſs and malice of the Devil, the infirmities of our Spirits, the Ignorance of our Underſtandings, the obliquity of our Will, the mutiny and diſorder of our Affections, the inconſtancy of our good Purpoſes, the unſtableneſs of our Reſolutions, the pleaſingneſs of ſenſual Objects, the variety of evil Occaſions, the perpetual readineſs of Opportunities for evil, our unwillingneſs to Good ſo great, that we are loth to beg Bleſſings and Benefits of God Almighty. Theſe, and thouſands more are but the particu-

ticular Instances of this first Argument to engage our striving. For the Gate, that is strait enough in its own abstract consideration, is made ten thousand times straiter by the supervening enmities of the Devil, the allurements of the World, the solicitations and impudent temptations of the Flesh, and the imperfections and great weaknesses of Mortality.

III.

I now come to the last *Notandum* of the Text, or the second Argument to enforce our striving, the Caution and Example of such persons, who have fallen short of entring, for want of due striving; *For many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.*

Many shall seek. The five foolish Virgins sought, and they who shall tell

tell Christ, that they did Miracles in his Name, they sought, and the *Pharisees* sought, but all seeking you see shall not find. Some seek themselves alone, and they shall never find any thing to satisfie them. Some seek God and themselves together. When Religion and their own ends can stand together, well and good; when Ease and Devotion, Charity and good Husbandry, Repentance and no restitution can stand together, we will seek to enter into Heaven; but if Heaven cannot be had but upon hard terms, they will not *pœnitentiam tanti emere*; they will not buy Repentance at so dear a rate, as to part with their goods unjustly gotten, that they may become true Penitents; neither will they love God and hate themselves, that is no good Charity they think; and therefore when God and our selves come to dispute the Question, whose in-

intereſt ſhall be ſerved; theſe men ſurely will ſerve themſelves firſt. No wonder that theſe men enter not.

But there are ſome that ſeek more heartily, that throw away all incumbrances, that ſet upon the work of holy Life with much zeal and fervour of Spirit in the beginning of their Converſion and Reſolutions of Piety; but their fervours cool, their zeal grows from very hot to be tepid, from tepid to be cold, from cold to be quite frozen and incruſtated; and at laſt comes to have no heat about them but zeal which is the συνώνυμον of Envy, and the heats of Luſt, and of a ſeared Conſcience. For the more furiouſly new Converts drive in their firſt onſets of Piety, if they once begin *deferveſcere*, to take off from their heights, their tediouſneſs is greater, their wearineſs more, their anger is more impatient; and to take off from the ſhame of remiſ-

neſs

neſs and relaxation they often juſtifie it, and thence degenerating by degrees come at laſt to induration. For if we obſerve the nature of Moral Alterations, and the malice of ſome perſons, when they are provok'd by ſhame, and conſider alſo the ſecret wayes, and juſt Counſels of God in taking away all thoſe Graces, which men have ſlighted and rejected; and commonly great zeals, if they degenerate, prove either abſolutely furious, or meerly Atheiſtical; and to all theſe add the probability of induration and obſtinacy in ſuch perſons, and the Moral impoſſibility of curing ſuch diſtemperatures, or riſing from ſuch deaths, we may well believe it impoſſible: Such Zealots who once grow cool for want of perſeverance in the ſtrict courſes of Piety, although they did ſeek to enter, yet *erunt excluſiſſimi*, they ſhall not be able.

Some

Some are disabled and stopt in their first setting out; some go half way, and then turn back again; nay some there are that have as I may say, set one foot in Heaven, and have drawn it back, and carried both to Hell. God's Counsels are secret, but they are ever just. But it is full of horror to consider, that some persons, who have lived holily and justly all their life, have at last yielded in a temptation to a single Act, and by the just judgment and severity of God have been taken away in that one act of Sin, whose condition then is most sad and deplorable. It is not good to tempt God. If we will forget God in one act, possibly he may with his Judgment so remember us, as to forget his Mercy towards us to all Eternity. And *Palladius* tells of divers old Hermits, who lived fifty or sixty years in the strict service of God, and at last in some peevish humour

mour diſpoil'd themſelves of all title and hopes of a Crown.

Was it not a ſad ſight to have obſerved amongſt the forty Martyrs, one of them, that had endured torments almoſt till the expiration of his laſt breath, and then to fall away to renounce Jeſus Chriſt, and to go out of his torments into a warm Bath immediately to dye and to periſh? A thought, a minute may deſtroy all our Glories, and our hopes of a bliſsful Immortality, which twenty or forty years have been with great labour in erecting.

There are ſome that deny hopes of Heaven to perſons that live excellent lives, upon pretence, that they are very good Moral Men, but not of the houſhold of Faith; that is, not of their belief in all matters of Opinion. The miſtake is ſtupid enough; for the diſtinction of perſons

Morally

Morally good, and Religiouſly or Divinely good, is not a diſtinction of ſubjects, but of degrees. For a moral life is not a diſtinct life from a Theological, but a part of it, and that Chriſtian which is juſt to his Neighbour, and ſober and temperate in his life, hath done ſome part of a Theological and Religious Life. Indeed it is not revealed to us, how the good lives of Heathens without the Faith of Jeſus Chriſt ſhall be accepted in order to Eternity: But to undervalue the good lives of Chriſtians by ſaying they are only good moral Men, becauſe they are not of ſuch a Sect, when they do thoſe good actions in obedience to the Laws of Jeſus Chriſt, is a profane device, to advance Faction and diſcountenance Piety.

Indeed if to our moral Vertues we add not alſo others which are more Spiritual; that is, if we ſtrive not to acquire

acquire all habits, which are good *in genere morum*, morally good, we ſhall not enter into Heaven: not becauſe we were only good moral Men, but becauſe we were not moral enough; we did not reform all our manners, we did not do our Religion and Charity to God, as well as Charity to our Neighbours. Our Piety muſt be univerſal, our Morality muſt be intire, and then the good moral Man ſhall go to God, when the Religious Man, as he accounts himſelf, ſhall never ſee him.

And indeed one of the greateſt dangers of miſcarrying is, in actions and undertakings, and intermixtures ſpiritual. For beſides that the whole Inſtitution of a ſpiritual Life is a nice and a buſie thing, the purgative way being troubleſome and auſtere, the illuminative being myſterious and apt to be abuſed, the unitive way not to be underſtood till it be felt,

and therefore liable to all miſcarriages, as not to be guided by Rule: beſides all this, I ſay, ſpiritual Vices are moſt dangerous, and yet moſt apt to inſinuate themſelves in the actions of greateſt perfections, and when they are mixt, 'tis extremely difficult to diſcern them and make a ſeparation.

How hard is it for a Man that hath lived holily, and one that rejoyces in and thanks God for his Graces, for his Deliverances from the power of the Devil; how hard, I ſay, is it for him to conſerve either his Conſcience and Truth, or his Humility and Modeſty, when he ſhall, or ſhall not ſay with St. *Paul*, I am the leaſt of good Men, and the greateſt of Sinners! for if he ſays ſo, and does not think ſo, he diſſembles; If he thinks ſo, how can he acknowledg God's Goodneſs in the manifeſtation of his Graces, and the deliverance

verance of him from Sin? If he does neither think so, nor say so, how is he so humble as his patern? for we are so to follow St. *Paul*, as he followed *Christ*. But then on the other side, how apt are Men when they humble themselves, to do it with greater pride? *Est qui nequiter humiliat se*, there is that humbleth himself wickedly. I cannot insist upon the particulars; but actions Spiritual are of so nice and immaterial consideration, that both not to be deceiv'd, and to discover it when we are deceived, are matters of no small difficulty.

You may see in little, that a Man may go a great way in Piety, and yet not enter into Heaven. What then shall we think of such persons, whose Piety hath no more age than a Fly; no more labour in it than walking in a shadow; no more expence than in the farthing-alms of the street or high-way; no more Devotion than going to

Church on Sundays; no more Juſtice than in preſerving the rules of Civil Society, and obeying the compulſion of Laws; no more Mortification than faſting upon a Friday, without denying one Luſt, and the importunity of ſinful Deſires? Theſe certainly are far from entring into the Gate, becauſe they are far from ſtriving to enter. And yet there want not ſome Men, will not do a quarter of this, and yet would ſpit in your face if you ſhould put them in doubt or queſtion their Salvation. Some Men are ſo fond as to think Heaven is intail'd upon a Sect or an Opinion, and then nothing is wanting to them, when they once have entred their name into that perſwaſion. Some are confident they ſhall be ſaved becauſe of their good meaning; and they think they mean well, becauſe they underſtand nothing, and in the mean time refuſe not any

oppor-

opportunity to an evil. Alas, they cannot help it, Flesh and Blood is frail; for who can forgive him that hath undone me and my Family? 'Tis true indeed, I should, if you speak like a Divine, but we have Flesh and Blood about us: Alas, I hate Drunkenness, and I am never intemperate for love of the Drink; but when a Man is in company he cannot do as he would do. And yet, these Men will think to go to Heaven, and yet will not do so much for it as either decline the company and opportunity of it, or the inconveniences of it. Flesh and Blood is the excuse, and yet we remember not, that Flesh and Blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; but we by making it to be our excuse, hope to enter the rather for it.

Remember those great words and terrible, spoken by an Oracle, by the Blessed St. *Peter*; *If the Righteous*

ſcarcely be ſaved, where ſhall the wicked and Sinner appear? If after much ſtriving many fall ſhort, and the Beſt is to work out his Salvation with fear and trembling, What confidence can they have, that are indifferent in their Religion, that have no engagement to it but cuſtom, no monitors but Sermons and the checks of a drowſy Conſcience, no fruits of it but not to be accounted a Man without a Religion? But as for a holy life they are as far from it as from doing Miracles; and he that is ſo and remains ſo, no Miracle will ſave him. Theſe are the Men that when the Eternal ſcrutiny ſhall come, then they ſhall ſeek, for they never ſeek till then to enter; and then it is as fruitleſs as it is late, as ineffectual as unreaſonable. Chriſt is the Way, and the Truth, and the Light, and he that openeth only the way for us to go in there, whither himſelf is entred before:

if

if we ſtrive according to his holy Injunctions, we ſhall certainly enter according to his holy Promiſes, but elſe upon no Condition.

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